c The Experiment in International Living (EIL) Project

EIL's women's income-generating project was set up by Darlene, the wife of the manager, in order to occupy herself (as she claimed) when she first arrived in Quetta four years ago. Although the project may have been set up for the wrong reasons, Darlene is a professional designer, has the experience of running a business in the US and is very committed to the project. The result of her dedication and enthusiasm is a 'successful' project which specialises in silver and gold, *Gulla Batoon* style, Pushtun embroidery.

Although the project is organised on the basis of piecework at home, it draws upon indegenous skills and traditional embroidery designs which are adapted and applied to various items of clothing, both for the local Pakistani market and the international export market. These items are displayed at the EIL premises in Quetta. The project is geared towards women heads of household in the Afghan refugee camps. In addition to providing income to the more vulnerable women among the refugees, it also enables women to pass on the skill of embroidery to their female children - a socialization process which had been interrupted in the refugee camps due to lack of resources.

The finer accounting details of the project were unavailalbe for scrutiny, but Darlene, claimed that after four years of solid hard work, the project now manages to break even. A constant problem though, is the lack of consistency in the quality of work, sometimes even with experienced artisans. This problem in quality control was partly attributed to the living conditions in the camps and partly to the fact that the women as producers have no contact with the market and the women who are the consumers. Darlene personally takes care of quality control in the camps and

marketing in the cities. The latter involves regular trips to Karachi and Islamabad to arrange exhibitions in hotels and orders from retail outlets.

Inspite of the apparent 'success' of the project, Darlene admitted that she does not take into account the overhead costs of the project which include two huge rooms, including a display centre at EIL, use of the EIL vehicles to go the refugee camps, services of an EIL driver etc. In fact, the project is partly funded by the UNHCR and concern was expressed for the future. The real test of the 'success' of the project, therefore, is yet to come. It remains to be seen whether the project can be sustainable after 1992 when UNHCR support is withdrawn.

d The Catholic Relief Society (CRS) Project

A project similar to the EIL one is run by the Catholic Relief Society (CRS), again based on piecework and specialising in one style of embroidery, namely Qandahari work. However, the quality of material used for embroidered shirts is not the best and it appears that the full potential of this particular project is not being realized. Whereas EIL and CRS showrooms are both located in very inaccessible areas of Sattelite Town, EIL does undertake active outreach marketing whereas CRS appears not to. CRS is also funded by UNHCR to contract out the sewing of school uniforms to Afghan refugee women. This involves training, and distributing sewing machines in exchange for labour involving the sewing of 25 uniforms.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

If Oxfam would like to set up a women's income generating project in Mariabad, all the issues highlighted and discussed above must be taken into consideration. Furthermore, the dangers inherent in a handicrafts project from the perspective of gender relations must also be taken into account. Knowing very well what the

limitations are when an organisation wants to set up an income-generating project for women in a purdah society or otherwise, I timidly venture to make reccomendations about some possible ways of avoiding these dangers:

a *Value of Women's Time and Labour*

There is a danger that an income-generating project for women, particularly one based on embroidery and handicrafts can unwittingly fail to value women's time, skill and labour in two ways. Firstly, embroidery and weaving skills are considered to be activities which women indulge in during their spare time, activities that are an extension of the domestic role/housework which is already undervalued in any case and not perceived in terms of monetary value. Secondly, when the work is contracted out on a piecework basis at home and thus invisibilised, a project can serve to re-affirm the prevailing myth/ideology which refuses to acknowledge that women actually have to and do work.for a living.

In order to give women an appropriate income for their work, it is is recommended that Oxfam arrive at a minimum acceptable wage for women within the local context of Mariabad, Quetta and if the handicrafts which are to be made appear to be marketable at that set rate and the project viable, then and then only should such a women's income generating project be taken seriously into consideration.

In order to avoid invisibilising women's work, the way the project is organised needs to be taken into account.

b Organisation

Projects which operate on the basis of contracted piecework done in the privacy of the home and in their spare time, not only serve to invisibilise women's work but force them to work in isolation and in a situation where their collective bargaining power is atomised, thus allowing exploitative conditions to be brought into their own homes.

Unlike the government centre and other non-governmental organisations which contract out piecework, Oxfam's income-generating project should be based at a centre in the neighbourhood which can offer women the chance to get together beyond the home in an organised group (preferably with childcare/creche facilities) and allow them to engage in other optional non-threatening activities such as health education or adult literacy, which would, one hopes, eventually lead to some kind of consciousness raising.

c Combining the Commercial and the Social

If the project has a combination of commercial and social aims, the failure of the former can be offset by success in the later. However, there is also the danger that an emphasis on one may lead to the marginalisation of the other. It is suggested that a project be designed primarily with a commercial function but also be utilised for a social objective.

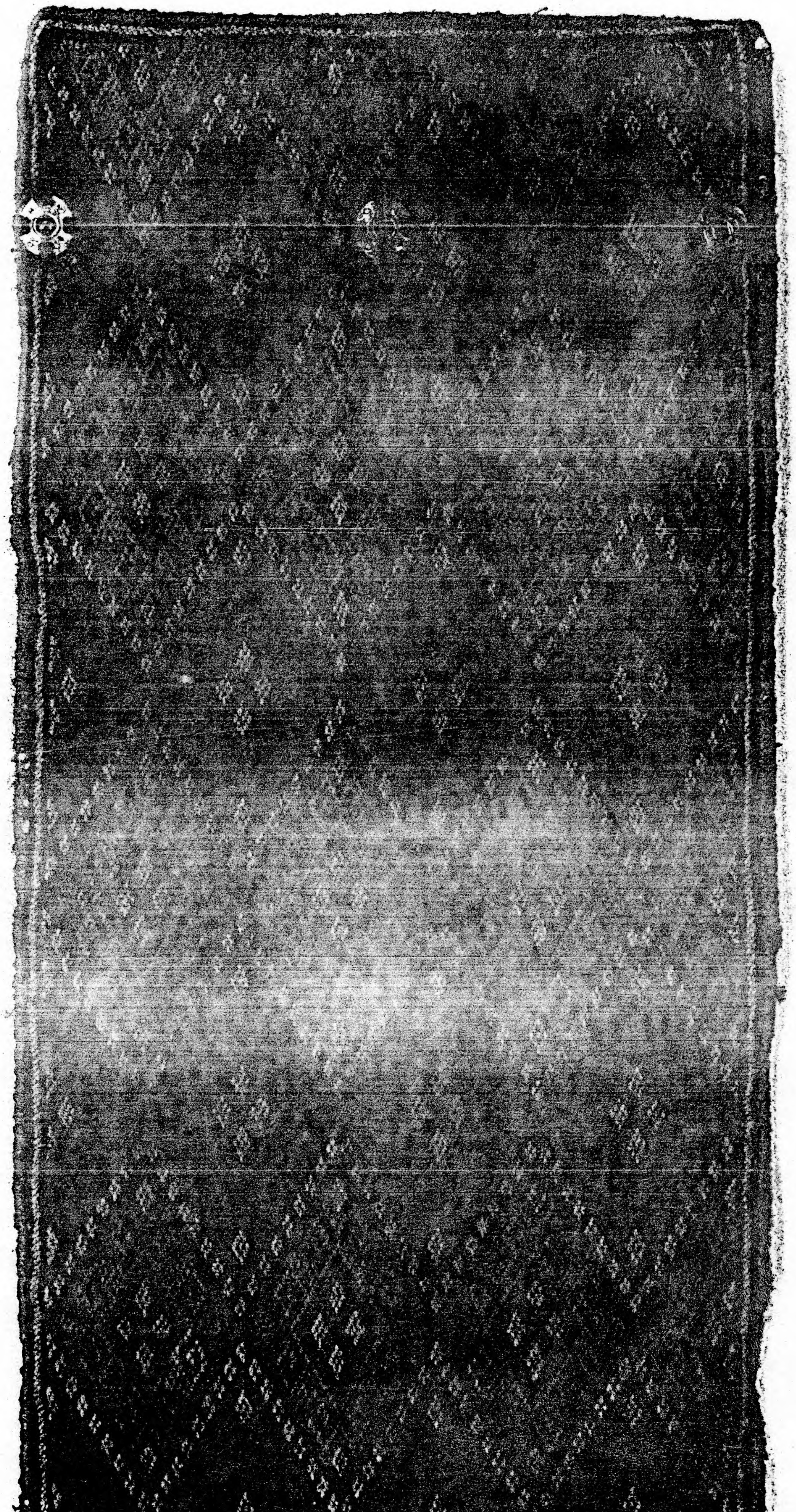
d Management

A very strong, dynamic and committed woman - with proven organising and marketing skills with a knowledge of both local as well as export market would be required to ensure that the project was a success.

e Co-ordination with other non-governmental organisations

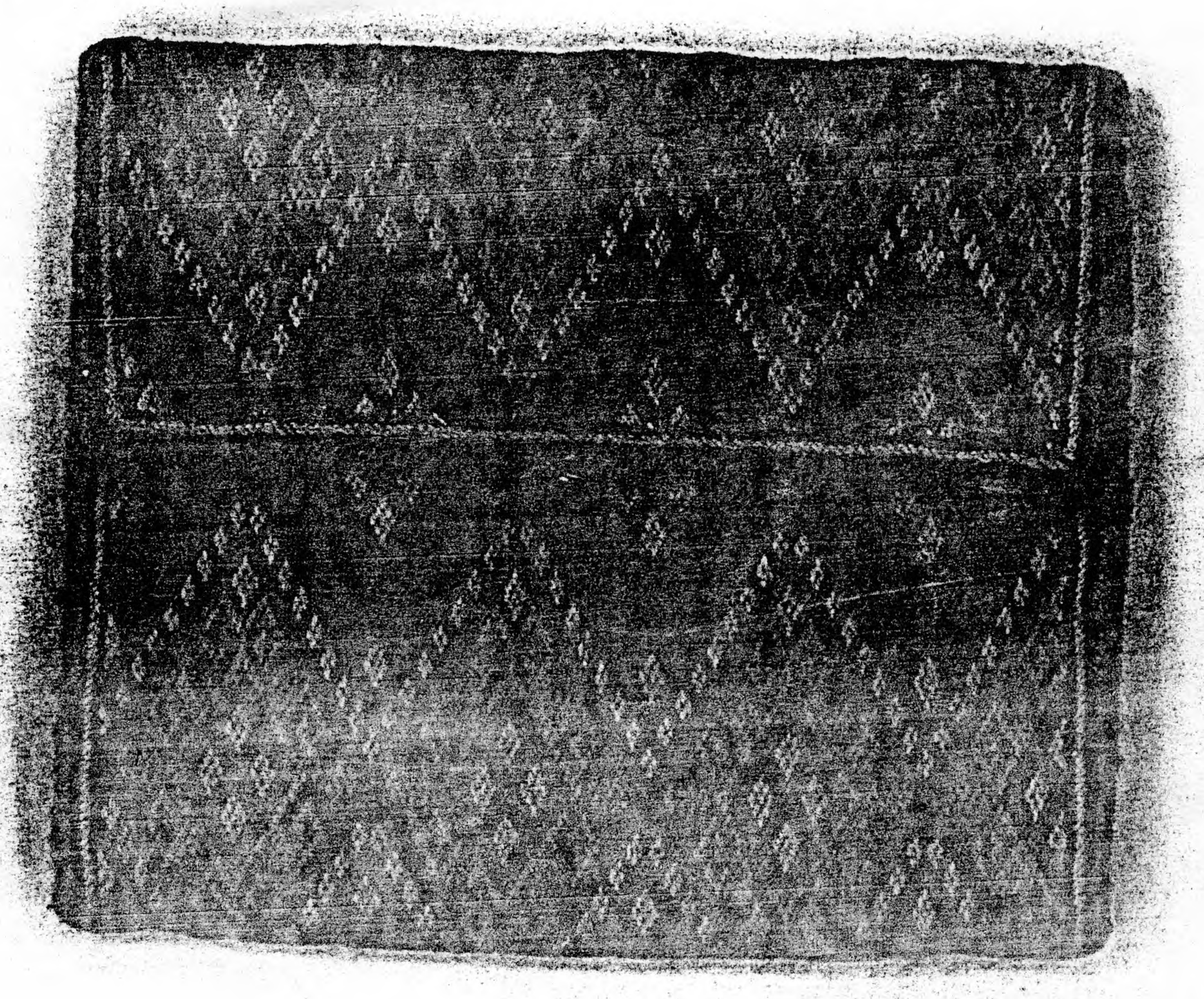
It is recommended that Oxfam, Pakistan try and set up some kind of forum whereby the experience, that is, the trials and tribulations as well as the rewards of setting up income-generating projects for women can be shared. And if possible, attempts should be made to move away from handicrafts for women's projects.

Phamot embroidery / Coin purse



Khamti embroidered

Coin purse



A FEASIBILITY STUDY OF WOMEN'S INCOME-GENERATING PROJECT IN MARIABAD, QUETTA.

Summary: the feasibiltiy study consisted of a preliminary identification of women's marketable skills with reference to embroidery and handicrafts; a study of the handicrafts market (both local and Afghan handicrafts) in Quetta, Peshawar and Islamabad; and a survey of on-going women's income-generating projects and training schemes run by other non-governmental organisations.

1 WOMEN'S SKILLS, TIME AND LABOUR

In an attempt to identify women's skills which could be marketable, women well-known for their handiwork were identified and visits were undertaken to five households in Mariabad. After a fair amount of persuasion, the Hazara women who were visited, gradually and slowly brought out samples of their work. It was necessary either to spend two or three hours at one place or to arrange a second visit in order to be able to see the entire range of work. Most of the completed articles consisted of embroidered pieces of cloth for use in the household - colourful handkerchiefs, decorative covers for radios and tape-recorders, tablecloths and *'dastarkhans'* , for example. Although the artwork on most of these items of household use was creative and colourful, most of them did not appear to have any commercial value and would not be readily marketable. However, it was possbile to identify three items of potential commercial value which were singled out and explored at length.

a Khamak embroidery

One form of artwork which stood out in particular in terms of its unusualness and intricacy was the traditional Hazara *khamak* embroidery. This very fine and unusual style of cross-stitch embroidery is charaterized by a multicoloured, diamond-shaped motif which is worked through with three or four different colours of thread. Like other styles of embroidery, *khamak* work is also used for decorative trimmings on women's clothes - along the neckline and cuffs of the *kameez*.. However, the *khamak* -embroidered item which appeared to be very appealing from a commercial point of view, both for the local and export market, was a coin/money-purse.

The rectangular money-purse measured four by eight and a half inches when unfolded, and four by three and a quarter inches when folded up and buttoned securely with an overlapping flap measuring one and a half inches. The entire piece of cloth (four by eight and a half inches), was covered by the diamond-motif embroidery, that is, to the last square millimetre. There were approximately 40 worked diamonds on this money purse.

Traditionally, this purse is made for a very special occasion: the Hazara bride personally embroiders one for her groom as a wedding present. Whereas this could be a selling point if viewed in strictly marketing terms, there is no doubt that some developmenatalists (anthropologists or otherwise) may like to ponder over the ethics of commercializing an item which is of considerable ceremonial significance in a culture.

The woman who had immaculately embroidered this particular purse was a newly-wed, Afghan Hazara who had married her cousin across the border in Mariabad,

Quetta. Ruqiya Ali, my research assistant and a bona fide resident of Mariabad, maintained that it is difficult to find such high quality of *khamak* work among the Mariabad (Pakistani) Hazara women in the locality, but not impossible. It would however, be quite possible to find Hazara women who are skilled in this embroidery in the unregistered refugee camps, in addition to the Afghan Hazara women living in Mariabad.

The *khamak* embroidery is labour intensive. Informants maintained that it takes at least an hour to embroider one complete diamond shape which measures one and a half inches vertically and an inch horizontally. This would mean, therefore, that the purse, which consisted of forty, embroidered diamond motifs would have taken an average of 40 hours to make, that is, an equivalent of about six intense, full-time working days of seven hours each. Over a slower pace of about three to four hours a day, in between housework, it was estimated that about two weeks would be required to complete one purse. At a modest rate of about Pak Rupees four per hour, the 40 hours of labour required to make one purse could be valued at 40 x 4 = 160 Rupees.

It seems quite possible, however, to create designs which reduce the embroidery work to smaller patches on purses as well as other items such as belts, for example, or even shirts/*kameez* for that matter. It is recommended that the new income-generating project officer due to be recruited by Oxfam, Pakistan, seriously take this embroidery into consideration.

b Kelim weaving

The Hazara women are also quite skilled in the craft of weaving flat woollen rugs or kelims (locally known as *kalin*) which mostly have a simple design of brightly coloured stripes. These rugs which are spread out on the floors of rooms in the

kachi-abadi, are part of the basic furnishings of a Hazara home. Normally, women make them with the help of neighbours and friends. Unlike the embroidery which is mainly done on an individual basis, the rug weaving activity draws upon an informal support group/network of women in the neighbourhood.

It appears that the rug-weaving is part of the gender division of labour of the Hazaras and can perhaps be traced to the earlier production system of a rural, self-subsistent economy when the furnishings of the house were made by women from the wool of the family's goatherds. Urbanization has, however, brought access to a new kind of wool - that which is unpicked from used and old sweaters, bought in the second-hand clothes bazaars, more popularly known as *Londa* bazaars. The wool from the *Londa* bazaars leads to inconsistencies in the colour schemes: if for example, a rug is made in stripes of red and blue, it may have two or three different shades of red since wool from different, red sweaters goes into the making of the rug.

The rugs are woven in different sizes but the more common, smaller and potentially marketable size measured 45 by 28 inches. If some kind of consistency can be maintained with regard to the quality and colour of the wool, this product would appear to be suitable for the export market. The women interviewed claimed that it took at least two of them, between two to three days full-time, that is, between 12 to 18 hours to weave the rug which measured 45 x 28 inches. The value attached to this work, at a minimum rate of Pak Rupees four per hour would be 36 x 4 = 144 Rupees.

c Embroidered waistcoat

Another attractive and possibly marketable item was a colourful machine embroidered Afghan waistcoat for women. Although these waiscoats are worn by Afghan refugee women and not by the Pakistani Hazara women of Mariabad, the

sample which was purchased for the Oxfam, Pakistan office in Islamabad was found in Mariabad and not in the refugee camp.

Although informants claimed that women make them, I was unable to locate any woman who had actually made one. It is possible that the waiscoats are tailored and embroidered by men since professional tailoring in the informal economy in Pakistan is an activity that does tend to be male-dominated (due to the well-known fact that women do not have access to the market).

However, this waistcoat, is worth pursuing, especially if the design/cut can be modified slightly to cater for the local as well as the export market. It was not possible to determine the length of time and the labour input required to make one of these items since I did not come across any woman who had made one. This waistcoat is worth pursuing for an income-generating project even if it is made by men.

2 THE HANDICRAFTS MARKET IN QUETTA, PESHAWAR AND ISLAMABAD

As is well known, the bazaars of Pakistan are flooded with handicrafts and Quetta is no exception. But although Baluchistan is, in fact, very well-known for its different styles of embroidery and handicrafts, a look through the two of the most popular and up-market shopping areas, namely the Jinnah Bazaar and the Crafts Centre at the Serena Hotel revealed that with the exception of Afghan jewellery, carpets and hats, Afghan embroidery/handiwork in general, and Hazara handiwork in particular is not represented here. The only outlets for Afghan handicrafts are specialist showroom-cum-shops located within the premises of non-governmental organisations which are quite inaccessible to any consumer - a local or a tourist for that matter.

Similarly, in Peshawar and Islamabad, Afghan handicrafts are found only in specialist shops also run by non-governmental organisations such as that managed by

the Ockendon Venture (Peshawar) and Save the Children (USA) in Nazimmudin Road in Islamabad.

This non-representation of Afghan and Hazara handicrafts in the cities may suggest that there is scope for introducing and marketing the items such as those three described in the previous section of this report. However, this may not necessarily be true, since the local markets are already flooded with Pakistani handicrafts and in order to capture a niche in an already saturated market, the price range of Afghan handicrafts have to be competetive.

In fact, if the Hazara *khamak* purse was to be sold in the local shop, the market price would be determined by other similar items available for purchase in the shops. For example, it is quite possible to get embroidered purses and wallets in shops in Quetta for anything between a minimum of Pak Rupees 70 to a maximum of 250-300 for the top range of the product.

Assuming that the *khamak* purse falls into the top range, the maximum retail price for it would be Pak Rupees 300. Out of this amount, if one accounts for the 160 Rupees for labour, the materials required such as threads and cloth, the marketing costs, administrative costs etc., not to forget the profit margin for the retail outlet - all these should be covered by the remaining sum of Rupees 140.

The price of the *khamak* purse can be further determined by taking into account similar items sold by the Ockendon Venture/Save the Children shops. Comparable items are the evening purse (Ockendon Venture catalogue number DC 001), the cosmetic purse (DC002), the fabric belt (DC 003) and velvet hats (DC 004), which are all embroidered with the *tarshoumar* cross-stitch, closely resembling the *khamak* style. These items, which are of lower quality than the *khamak* purse, cost

an average of Pak Rupees 250 in Islamabad and Peshawar, and about £13 in the Oxfam shops in the UK.

Although the Hazara rugs made in and around Mariabad are not represented in the up-market shopping areas of Quetta, they are readily available in shops in Sattelite Town and less frequently in the Qandahari Bazaar. As mentioned earlier, this rug is part of the basic furnishings of a house and not a luxury consumer item. Furthermore, the rugs are sold in various neighbourhoods by men who peddle them on bycicles. Informants claimed that while the rugs are made by those women from low-income households, who mostly live up on the mountain slope near Mariabad and sold by their husbands or sons. In other words, there is a distinct gender division of labour in this small-scale, entrepreneurial activity within the low-income households, with female labour being engaged in the production of the rugs and male labour in the marketing of the finished product.

An average sized rug (three feet by one and a half or two feet) can be bought easily for about 500 - 700 Pak Rupees in the bazaar. However, if it had to be designed from scratch so as to maintain a consistency in terms of shades of colour, goat's wool would have to be purchased and dyed, in which case, the cost of the raw materials only, would amount to 700 - 800 Rupees and in addition the cost of three days of labour should be added on. Whereas this designed rug would obviously not be competitive in the local market, it is possible to look into it as an item for the export market. Perhaps an income-generating project may consider involving those women who already produce for the local market.

3 ON-GOING WOMEN'S INCOME-GENERATING PROJECTS IN QUETTA

a The Craft Centre - Alamdar Road

This government-funded craft centre is supposed to cater for women in the lower income groups in Mariabad. A visit to the centre revealed a carpet-weaving project involving young girls of between eight to twelve years who are employed to work from
8 a.m. to 2 p.m, at the rate of Rupees 200 a month. Since it is not considered 'respectable' for older girls or women to work, the burden of supplementing the household's income falls on girls in the eight to twelve age group as they are seen as being old enough to work and young enough not to have reached the age of puberty.

The 'typical' women's project here consisted of a group of twenty women who were taught how to sew garments for a monthly stipend of Rupees 200 over a period of six months. Whereas the centre had a showroom where some of the clothes tailored by the women were on display and could be purchased, this was completely unknown to other women living in the neighbourhood. It must be noted that the end product of many projects such as this one do not see the light of day and fail to reach a retail outlet. Furthermore, there is no attempt at following up the progress of participants after the completion of the six-month training period and it is not known whether the women are able to put their sewing skills to commercial use.

This government crafts centre also operates on a piecework basis with some women in Mariabad who are contracted to embroider cushion covers from home at Rupees 80 a piece. The materials and the design are provided by the centre and the rate of 80

Rupees covers the charges for approximately a week of labour (approximately 30 - 35 hours a week).

b Nachari Industrial Centre

This training scheme/women's project is located in Nachari Road and is managed by Mr Khilji, a retired army officer and his wife. A portion of the Khilji residential house, consisting of two rooms, has been converted into two classes where women are taught sewing and embroidery for a year. In addition, this centre also offers basic literacy classes. Once more, a small stipend is attached to the training which lasts a year. Upon completion of the course, the women are given a free sewing machine, the clothes they have stitched during the course of the training (materials provided by Nachari Industrial Centre), and a certificate. The 40 women who are taken into this training scheme have to be either widows or orphans in order to qualify. Mr Khilji was quite keen to emphasize that no men (other than himself, of course) were permitted to enter the premises of the Nachari Industrial Centre.

Whereas the government-run scheme appears to be a very badly planned and half-hearted attempt at a women's income-generating project, the Nachari scheme has a downright 'welfarist' approach. This was quite clear when Mr Khilji maintained that the sewing machines and clothes given away to the participants of the project would be a contribution to the dowry of needy women! The project is not aimed at imparting survival or earning skills to women, nor does it have the objective of empowering them in any way; it is in fact run as a charitable venture.

A REPORT SUBMITTED TO OXFAM, PAKISTAN BASED ON FIELDWORK IN QUETTA FROM 10 MARCH TO 3 APRIL, 1991

Sabrina Kassim
Report Two
July 1991